

# A conceptual insight on digital parallel workshops for urban planning.

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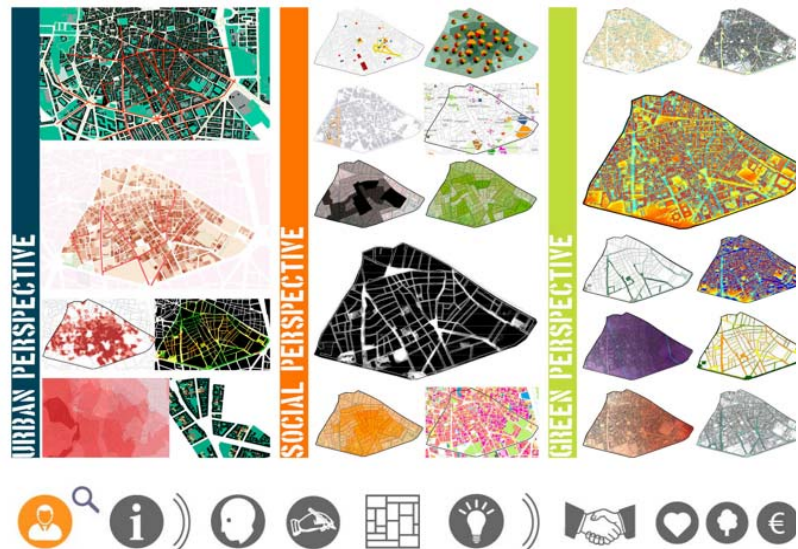
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## 1. Introduction

The educational realm in Urban Planning needs a review because of the global challenges that human settlements will face in the near future. In this scenario, international boards of research call for the development of common frameworks of research, accreditation, and planning best-practices, that need to transcend the limits of local competences, which at the same time affect educational structures. A central issue on achieving this pursued consensus is international cooperation among academic institutions, seeking global awareness on urban challenges, built equally upon a variety of context-based experiences. The rise of ICT's and digital tools are widely perceived as a great field of opportunity to establish complex and de-centralized networks of knowledge-building that can be critical to address these needs.

This is the conceptual framework in which the “Parallel Virtual Workshop (PVW)” was set in 2011 by a group of professors at the Department of Urban and Regional Planning, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid (UPM) [1]. The PVW project pursued three major goals from its beginning: achieving academic internationalization based on a virtual network, implementing a professional practice approach on urban regeneration projects, and developing a multidisciplinary methodology to handle complex urban problems in diverse contexts. Furthermore, the workshop intended to explore the possibilities of ICT's integration in order to improve its outcomes in the above stated global concerns on cooperation, and its specific academic goals.



## 2. Objectives.

The goal is to enable students of both universities to work together on neighbourhood scale to achieve sustainable and feasible proposals in the case study. The methodological approach is structured in a cycle and interactive way: Site analysis-General Information-Grassroots initiatives-Ideas-Agreements in time and place for a participative sustainable neighborhood with digital innovative tools (GIS, See Image 1).

**Image 1.** Urban workshop spring 2015. Lavapies (Madrid)  
Methodological approach GIS tools: Source: GIE-UPM 2015

Complementary goals achieved were first the usage of innovative technology within the setting of the public institutions; and on second place work synchronously on the various aspects of the urban real problems; and finally the internationalization [2] as a key element to show that an array of city issues in areas such as, but not restricted to, environmental, management, governance, investment and financial might apply the same strategies in remote parts of the world.

### 3. Digital parallel workshops framework

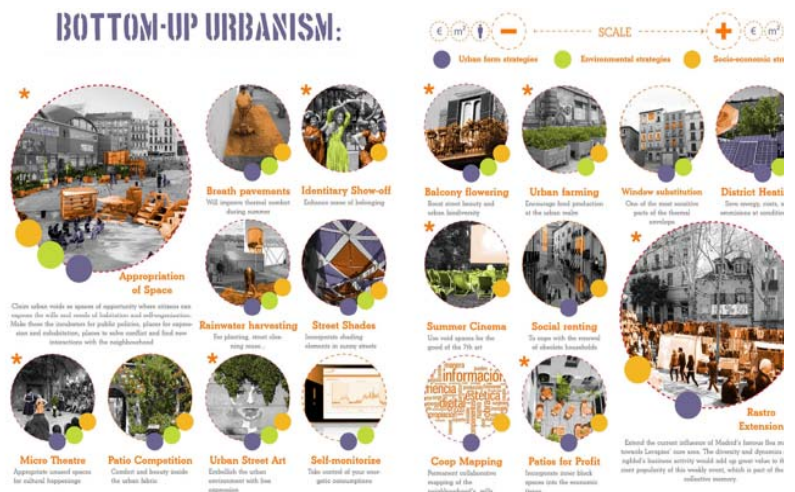
Teaching activity in Urban Planning at the graduate level, is quite unique in having to combine an important role of the local components (determinants of physical and urban environment, professional or legal framework, etc.) with more widespread methods (GIS, "mapping", statistics, "big data", public control, participatory design, etc.) as well as with the increasingly complex and globalized processes of this field (real estate involvement, urban ecology, etc.). The potential for communication and academic interaction that involves the appearance of digital education offers an interesting range of experimentation on these epistemological specificities, as well as on innovative teaching approaches.

Supported in the practical background of four editions of a virtual workshop between universities in different countries, the so called DUyOT-UPM's "Parallel Workshop" (PVW), provides a conceptual insight of the potential of digital education environment and the specificities of academic activity in urban planning. The workshop explores the challenges and perceived opportunities for the construction of learning activities in network urban design areas. The aim is to understand what extent of the new digital tools pack a punch in this area and what the next steps are, for enhance and extend the experience of the Parallel Workshop (PVW).

Finally, the workshop insights the contribution, for the necessary adaptation of urban planning tools to these phenomena, that have radically changed after the bursting of the real state bubble and that arouse increasing interest in glo-local societies.



**Image 2.** Urban workshop spring 2015. Lavapiés (Madrid)  
Integrated analytical data on GIS maps. Source: GIE-UPM 2015



**Image 3.** Urban workshop spring 2015. Lavapiés (Madrid)  
Multiple sustainable actions for bottom-up decisions. Source: GIE-UPM 2015

#### 4. Results and Discussion

The 2015 Urban Workshop experience has been developed on Lavapiés neighbourhood (Madrid). Quantitative data on the site has been used in a multiple way and with integrated and dynamic analytical approach: urban, social and a green perspective. (See Image 2). GIS tools were used as both a medium of interaction among students and a manner with which to reproduce results. Furthermore, the use of technology has fundamentally changed the analytical process, resulting in output of the highest level. [3] The main results were to understand the planner as an integrated annalistic coordinator to achieve the sustainable and integrated goals by bottom up urbanism. Looking for the synergies and diverse benefits in order to have an engaged, empowered and proud neighborhood, developed by themselves. (See image 3)

#### 4. Conclusions

Four editions have been carried out so far, and many questions have risen on the suitability and academic outcomes of the different pedagogical approaches applied to each case, paying special attention to the perceived challenges that lay on the disciplines' peculiarities, the barriers on international cooperation, specific educational needs of Urban Planning, and digital education issues. Many of the challenges faced on all four editions have been identified in these drivers, and they have been proved to be recurrent in the topic's literature. Supported in the practical background of four editions of the PVW, we provide a conceptual insight of the potential of digital education and networking environments at the specific sphere of academic activity in Urban Planning. We will explore the challenges and perceived opportunities for the construction of learning activities in network urban design workshops, to understand to which extent networking pedagogies, cooperative methodologies and new digital tools pack a punch in this area, and what are the next steps to enhance and extend the experience of the PVW for future editions.

#### 5. Notes

[1] Group de Innovation Education, [GIE Urban Net-Working Workshop- DUyOT-UPM.]. Higuera\_Fdez Güell\_Lamiquiz. Ph. student Manuel Benito. 125- URBAN NET-WORKING WORKSHOPS [http://innovacioneducativa.upm.es/informacion\\_grupo?grupo=294](http://innovacioneducativa.upm.es/informacion_grupo?grupo=294)

[2] 2015 Urban workshop agreement between Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, Spain & Kingston University UK;. MA Planning and Sustainability at Kingston University – London (UK) and the MA Planeamiento Urbano y Territorial at UPM –Madrid (Spain). Assisted also by Fulbright professor: James Buckley. Massachusetts Institute of Technology \_ MIT-Boston\_ USA

2015 Blog web site as a reference:

<http://www2.aq.upm.es/Departamentos/Urbanismo/blogs/evolving-cities-duyot-ku-2015/>

[3] Workshops conclusions were presented at Barcelona, May 2015, *Beyond Building* Construmat Congress.